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3977-8 IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: Victor et al.

Art Unit: 2171

Serial No.: 09/772,810

Examiner: Kurt Fernstrom

Filed: January 30, 2001

Customer No. 29540

For: **METHOD AND MATERIALS FOR ENCOURAGING
CREATIVE THINKING, PLANNING OR DECISION MAKING**

TRANSMITTAL OF APPEAL BRIEF

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S I R:

Enclosed is an original brief to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences and three photocopies thereof. This Appeal Brief is being filed pursuant to the Notice of Appeal dated April 21, 2004, with an apparent Office filing date of April 23, 2004. A check for the Rule 17 fee for filing an appeal brief is enclosed herewith. Any other fees may be charged to Deposit Account 50-1145, Order No. 3977-8.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald Levy
Registration No. 24,419

Ronald E. Brown
Registration No. 32,200

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Before the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences

Application Serial No. 09/772,810

Filed: January 30, 2001

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**METHOD AND MATERIALS FOR ENCOURAGING
CREATING THINKING, PLANNING OR DECISION MAKING**

Ex parte: Bart Victor
Johan Roos
Robert K. Rasmussen

BRIEF FOR THE APPELLANTS

10/19/2004 BSAYASI1 00000061 09772810

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1530.00 OP

10/19/2004 BSAYASI1 00000061 09772810

02 FC:1402

340.00 OP

Pitney Hardin LLP
Attorneys for the Appellants

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest is assignee Executive Discovery Ltd., which is related to the LEGO Foundation.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

None

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-6, 8-11, 13 and 14 are rejected.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

No after-final amendments were filed in response to the final Office Action of October 21, 2003. The Notice of Appeal was filed April 21, 2004 with an apparent Office filing date of April 23, 2004.

V. SUMMARY OF INVENTION

A program, method and materials for enhancing creative thinking, communication, decision-making and strategic planning are provided. The program, materials and method are based on the interplay between physical manipulation of symbolic physical objects (page 4, lines 15-16), visualization and the effect of such manipulation and visualization on the development and enhancement of the ability to imaginatively, thoughtfully and creatively deal with actual situations and objectives. For example, by physically manipulating building blocks, such as those having stud or knob configurations, which are fastened together such that the studs from

the top of one block can fit into receptacles on the bottom of another block (Figs. 1A-4C; page 8, lines 1-24), in connection with discussions relating to objects built with the blocks, which are symbolic of aspects of business, the thinking processes, creative processes and effectiveness of individuals can be fostered and/or enhanced.

Building objects that relate to topics for discussion enhances an individual's ability to psychologically become involved with the discussion topics. The creations become props for fostering and/or enhancing the discussion of selected topics and lead to more productive and creative communication (page 6, line 22 – page 7, line 2). The invention also involves written materials and sets of building blocks that are associated with the written materials to guide the discussion and building sessions. Programs conducted in accordance with the invention can use the tools of building physical metaphors (page 7, lines 3-11), telling stories, telling stories involving physical metaphors, imagination, and the enhancement of imagination through constructing models of things imagined, and then the modification of such models to create things previously unimagined, to enhance a participant's ability to achieve goals of increased understanding and decision-making.

VI. ISSUES

1. Are Claims 1-6, 8-11 and 13-14 directed to statutory subject matter under 35 U.S.C. §101? Similarly, are Claims 1-6, 8-11 and 13-14 patentable under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, with respect to the enablement requirement?

2. Are Claims 1-6, 8-11 and 13-14 patentable under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph?

VII. GROUPING OF CLAIMS

The claims stand together for each ground of rejection.

VIII. ARGUMENTS

1. Are Claims 1-6, 8-11 and 13-14 directed to statutory subject matter under 35 U.S.C. §101? Similarly, are Claims 1-6, 8-11 and 13-14 patentable under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, with respect to the enablement requirement?

The Office Action rejects the claims under 35 U.S.C. §101 on the grounds that, allegedly, no concrete or tangible result is produced. However, attached hereto are copies of a partial list of companies that have utilized the LEGO Serious Play concept which is the commercial embodiment of the presently claimed invention. Additionally enclosed are testimonials from the participants. These attachments, with the exception of “Lego, It’s Serious Play”, were included with the Amendment dated July 30, 2003 in response to the first Office Action. It is respectfully submitted that these attachments establish that a “concrete and tangible result” is produced by the claimed invention.

Moreover, as stated in State Street Bank & Trust v. Signature Financial Group, 47 USPQ2d 1596, 1600 (Fed.Cir. 1998), “The plain and unambiguous meaning of §101 is that any invention falling within one of the four stated categories of statutory subject matter [process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter] may be patented ...”. It is respectfully submitted that the present invention is a new and useful process and is patentable under Title 35 of the U.S. Code, including section 101.

Similarly, these attachments clearly establish that a “concrete and tangible result” is achieved for this invention, without undue experimentation, particularly from the viewpoint of corporate human resources and similar fields, and is therefore enabled under section 112, first paragraph.

2. Are Claims 1-6, 8-11 and 13-14 patentable under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph?

The Office Action rejects the presently pending claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. It is respectfully submitted that the cited phrase “to serve as physical metaphors” is made definite by the language of Claim 1 reciting “models with connectable and detachable building blocks to serve as physical metaphors”. That is, the models that serve as metaphors are physical models built from connectable and detachable building blocks. Furthermore, the specification at page 7, lines 12-19 gives fully definite examples of what such metaphors could be. Similarly, the phrases “relating to aspects of the topic” and “how the features of the model relate to the topic” are discussed in the first paragraph of the “Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiments” (the paragraph bridging pages 4 and 5). It is respectfully submitted that the relationship of the “metaphors” to the “aspects of the topic” are discussed throughout the specification in such definite terms as to make these phrases definite within the context of the claims. Similarly, the Appellants traverse the rejection regarding the language “involves” and “business planning” (Claim 2). It is respectfully submitted that the specification is replete with examples of topics involving business planning, and that there would be nothing indefinite in these terms to one skilled in the art of corporate human resources, corporate management and similar fields. Similarly, the terms “represents” and “an aspect” appear in claim 3 in the phrase “wherein at least one of the metaphors represents an aspect of a company”. Again, the examples given at page 7, lines 12-19; page 9, line 5 through page 10, line 2; the paragraph bridging pages 11 and 12; and throughout the specification make this claim language definite.

The phrase “how that relates to how the company and its customer interact” as well as the phrase “how to address changes in how the company and its customer interact” is discussed and made definite by the language in the paragraph bridging pages 15 and 16 and throughout the specification.

Similarly, the phrase “represent” in Claim 9 relates to “real people” which is fully discussed and made definite by the first full paragraph of page 10 and the phrase “representing guiding principles” is discussed in the specification and made definite by the paragraph bridging pages 4 and 5 (see page 5, line 4); the last full paragraph of page 13 (see page 13, line 16); the last full paragraph of page 16 (see page 16, line 18); and throughout page 18 (see page 18, lines 5, 7, 9 and 17). Moreover, such a term would be well understood by one skilled in the art of corporate human resources and similar fields.

It is respectfully submitted that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, has been overcome.

The Board is respectfully requested to find all of the presently pending claims to be allowable.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerald Levy", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Gerald Levy
Registration No. 24,419

Ronald E. Brown
Registration No. 32,200

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IX. APPENDIX OF PRESENTLY PENDING CLAIMS

1. A method for fostering thinking associated with a selected topic, comprising:
assembling a group of participants for the purpose of discussing a selected topic;
causing the participants to construct models with connectable and detachable building blocks to serve as physical metaphors, said metaphors relating to aspects of the topic;
reconfiguring said models as a plurality of new objects;
causing the participants to discuss the models they constructed and describe how the features of the model relate to the topic.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the topic involves business planning.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein at least one of the metaphors represents an aspect of a company and at least one of the metaphors represents a customer of the company.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the participants are caused to create physical links between the physical metaphors representing the company and its customers, and the participants discuss the type of link selected and how that relates to how the company and its customers interact.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein the participants discuss how to address changes in the way the company and its customers interact.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the participants identify guiding principles for governing how to address changes in the way the company interacts with its customers.

Claim 7 (canceled)

8. The method of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the blocks have a rectangular top surface with raised cylindrical pegs and said blocks have a bottom surface configured to releasably receive the pegs, said blocks constructed to connect by inserting the pegs from one block into the bottom of a second block.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the metaphors constructed represent real people.

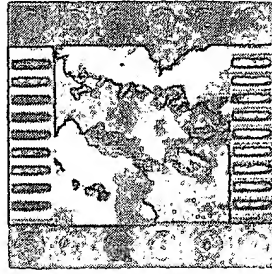
10. The method of claim 1, wherein participants construct models selected from a predefined set.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein participants first construct models from a predefined set and then construct their own metaphoric models.

Claim 12 (canceled)

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the participants build a model and tell a story relating to the topic that describes aspects of the model.

14. The method of claim 2 wherein at least one of the metaphors represents an aspect of a company and the participants construct models representing guiding principles for governing how to address changes in the way the company implements its business strategy.



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Applications for Organizations,
Teams and Individuals

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SERIOUS PLAY™


LEGO SERIOUS PLAY is a groundbreaking way to realize, unlock and maximize the

human potential in your organization.

LEGO SERIOUS PLAY is a highly innovative and powerful methodology based on the belief that everyone can contribute to the discussion, the decisions and the outcome.

The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY processes release and create individual and team insights and imagination. People gain understanding and clarity regarding the identity and dynamics of their organization. They are empowered to make effective decisions and do so with confidence and commitment.

LEGO SERIOUS PLAY is a highly efficient process. Within just a few days, an organization can have a clear, shared direction with people who are confidently aligned and committed to a course of action. Suddenly, insights have a real impact on the organization.



"The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY experience truly does inspire a group to become more imaginative in both their thoughts and their solutions."

Lance Saunders, Sr. Vice President
Director of Strategic Planning
Leo Burnett
Canada

Leaders who want to listen, gain insight, and empower everyone in the organization to realize their full potential are ready for LEGO SERIOUS PLAY.



Get more out of your meetings.

Think of the many times people meet during the business day to have a conversation –

to solve a problem, brainstorm ideas, initiate a project, develop a team, deal with a crisis or create a new strategy. Regardless of the purpose, it's the people in your organization who have the potential to contribute to the solutions.

They also have

the natural desire to influence and impact the things that are important to them.

Traditional ways of working together do not always offer an opportunity for each person to express critical insights. LEGO SERIOUS PLAY levels the playing field, engaging 100% attention and participation. People use their imagination, share insights, gain confidence in their ability to take action and are more motivated and committed to the shared and common goals.

Fully harvest the insight, ideas and imagination available in your company.

Wise leaders recognize that the only sustainable source of competitive advantage is the experience, knowledge and imagination present in the people of the organization. Too often, it remains simply an untapped capacity.

LEGO SERIOUS PLAY taps into the human ability to imagine – to describe and make sense of the business at hand, to initiate change and improvement, and even to create something radically new. And rather than starting with a "blank page", LEGO SERIOUS PLAY uses LEGO bricks and elements and a unique process where people "think through their fingers" – unleashing insight, inspiration and imagination.

LEGO SERIOUS PLAY is play with a purpose: to achieve specific results, to build strong relationships, to develop new strategies, and to express complex ideas using a concrete tool. The process itself is an art and a science based on extensive research from the fields of business, psychology, organizational development and education.

Traditional ways of working together do not always offer an opportunity for each person to express critical insights.

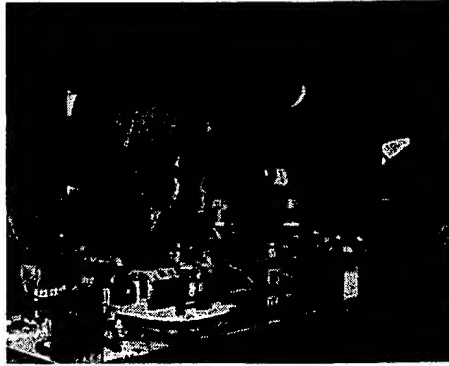
"It became easy to describe complex relationships in a complex process, enabling rich dialogue respecting the views and values of each team member."

Dr. Niggi Iberg, People & Communication,
Roche Pharma Research
Switzerland



Applications for Organizations, Teams and Individuals.

ALL LEGO SERIOUS PLAY workshops are group processes and designed around a relatively limited number of powerful core concepts. These conceptual modules can be configured in multiple ways to best meet your needs.



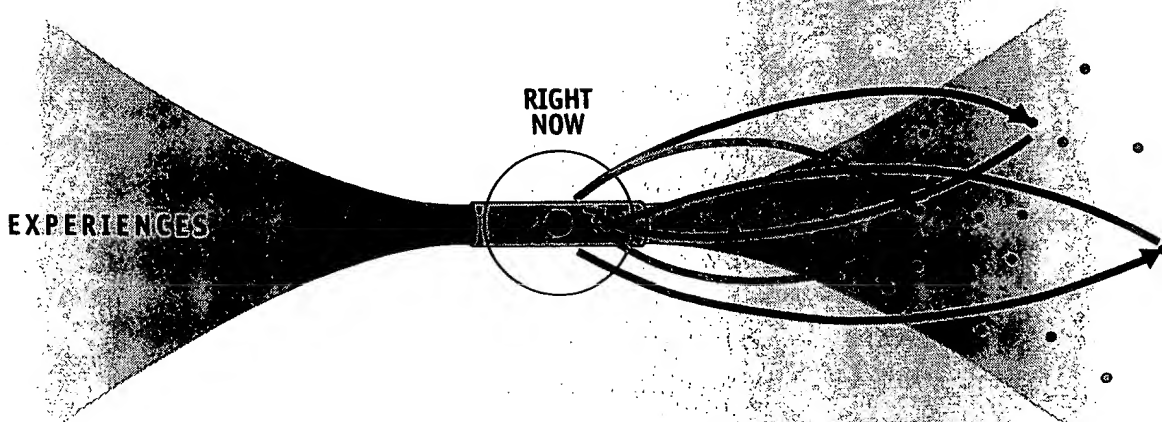
Real Time Strategy and Real Time Identity are efficient processes that pull both our past experience and our future aspirations into the present.

Real Time Strategy enables organizations to explore the Identity, Landscape and Simple Guiding Principles for their business and establishes the foundation for better decision making now and in the future. It's used when a company desires to act quickly, intentionally and with confidence in any critical situation to deliver better results.

Real Time Identity unlocks the potential of teams, building strong bonds, sharpening team insights and creating team commitment. By identifying how each individual team member connects and contributes, individuals learn to leverage their strengths and talents and optimize team performance.

The **Real Time** process begins with the "right now". It draws in relevant parts of the past and integrates this with the future hopes, aspirations and fears of everyone in the room. It is brought to the process in order to find out what can and should be done today. Being better at "now" results in being better prepared for challenges and opportunities in the future.

Traditional business tools typically analyze the past or speculate about the future. The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY products incorporate elements from the past and future and test them in Real Time to achieve improved decision making immediately.





LEGO SERIOUS PLAY

applications for:

- Strategy Making and Implementation
- Change Management
- Scenario Development & Testing
- Mergers & Acquisitions
- Branding
- Teambuilding
- Turnaround & Re-structuring
- Innovation & Product Development
- Market Entry
- Operational Efficiency
- Competitive Analysis

where a company seeks to:

- Reveal more impactful insights
- Improve decision making
- Find hidden opportunities
- Stimulate entrepreneurship
- Improve project leadership
- Surface hidden issues
- Clarify values, roles, identities
- Integrate new teams and new members
- Resolve conflicts
- Integrate diverse cultures
- Discuss the un-discussable

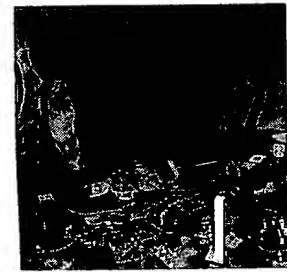
LEGO SERIOUS PLAY comes with its own vocabulary – a rich and natural way to communicate, easily understood by all.

Using unique LEGO bricks, the group participants build models of business or team issues and give them meaning through metaphors and story-making. They collaborate and negotiate to create a shared model.

"What if" scenarios are played out effectively and efficiently, and people share their own understandings of key

challenges and opportunities. More insights and information are shared in a shorter period of time than through traditional methods such as flipcharts and whiteboards.

This hands-on process integrates cognitive, emotional and social aspects to deliver both immediate and long-lasting impact.



"The brightly colored graphic elements of the model become indelibly etched in the minds of all those who are exposed to this novel depiction of strategy. The resultant benefits of recall are obvious."

Dr. Steve Bluen, Director, Human Resources
SABMiller
South Africa

People create possibilities, solutions and change.

When you use LEGO SERIOUS PLAY for thinking,
problem solving and communication:

- All relevant insights, knowledge, ideas and imagination will be brought to the table for effectively dealing with the issue at hand
- People involved in the process will feel confident that the outcomes can be implemented and make a real difference for the business
- Results will be durable and have long-lasting benefits for the company

Executive Discovery LLC, Suffield, CT 06078, USA

Executive Discovery LLC is the corporate entity - associated with the LEGO® Company - that develops and manages the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY™ brand. The LEGO logo, and the knob and brick configuration are trademarks of the LEGO Group and are used here under license by Executive Discovery LLC. ©2008 Executive Discovery LLC and the LEGO Group. 4225299



SERIOUS PLAY™

Executive Discovery LLC

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Testimonials

"Building is very impactful. It allows us to listen to the whole person/team. To hear people's fears, intentions, and aspirations. It gives the power to be completely present and attentive to everything that is happening. To learn and perhaps realize that if something is important to a person/team, then it's important. LEGO SERIOUS PLAY provides a tool to have fierce (= passionate, unedited, powerful, intense, eager) conversations. To ask the questions: 'When you can do nothing, what can you do?', a 'What

is currently impossible to do that, if it were possible, would change everything?' To interrogate reality, provoke learning, tackle potentially tough issues, enrich relationships."

Valeria Maltoni, Communications Director
Cerexagri, Inc.
Philadelphia, PA USA

"It wasn't just fun, it was amazing how much I learned with my hands. The constructs we built were metaphors for objects and systems in our world, and they helped our imaginations take off."

Theresa Quintanilla
President, QViews Marketing Consulting
Houston, TX USA

"LSP is a tool, which makes everybody participate in the process – everyone shares their stories and models, their new insight."

"Through LSP it becomes safe to talk about the difficult and sensitive issues which otherwise all too often are left untouched."

"LSP is an effective tool which secures the focus, it really forces out what is the key in the process."

"LSP helps develop new and creative solutions – new ideas emerge from unexpected sources."

"LSP brings out the energy in the team."

Mette Gro Iversen
Managing Director,
Pluss Care and Rehabilitation

"The ideas and the creativity just start to flow. LEGO SERIOUS PLAY brings out the best each team member has to offer."

Marcy Geiger, Director, Customer Service
VerizonWireless, USA

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LOGOUT
CONTACT INFORMATION
COMMUNITY
DISCUSSION FORUMS
CHAT
WHO'S ONLINE
MY PROFILE



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"We needed to manage dynamic and complex projects in a way that would spur and secure creativity and innovation. LSP gave us that, (as well as) new insights (and) a shared focus."

Sven Ekeberg, Business Engagement Consulting,
AstraZeneca IS Operations & Business Service, Sweden

"With LEGO SERIOUS PLAY, it became easy to describe complex relationships in a complex process, enabling rich dialogue, respecting the views and values of each team member."

"In LEGO SERIOUS PLAY, with a metaphor one can say more than with 1000 words."

"In expressing thoughts as models and metaphors, LEGO SERIOUS PLAY draws on the right side of the brain."

Dr. Niggi Iberg, People & Communication
Roche Pharma Research, Switzerland

"It is permeating into the culture of how we're managing the Inn. Departments are in tune with talking to each other."

"The strategy was critical in allowing management to move beyond century-old traditions, and I suggest that other companies would do well to look beyond LEGO as toys."

"I really think it's going to work best for any organization that has identified a communication or strategy problem or is looking to move to another level in developing their managers and staff."

Dick Schwalbenberg, Manager
Black Point Inn, USA

"Real Time Strategy is an excellent vehicle to advance corporate strategy and to deal with the inevitable issues and dilemmas that face any forward-thinking dynamic organization."

"The use of the LEGO metaphors crystallizes many issues that would otherwise be difficult to surface."

"The 3-D nature of the strategic model enables ongoing updating and refining of the corporate strategy as changes emerge over time."

"The brightly colored graphic elements of the model become indelibly etched in the memory of all those who are exposed to this novel depiction of strategy. The resultant benefit recall is obvious."

Dr. Steve Bluen, Director, Human Resources
SABMiller, South Africa

"The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY experience truly does inspire a group to become more imaginative in both their thoughts and their solutions."

"The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY experience is a terrific process to get people engaged and beyond the obvious solutions."

"The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY experience inspires the imagination and creativity that we possess but sometimes we unknowingly keep too deep beneath the surface."

"It truly is serious play that inspires a group to become more creative in both their thoughts and their solutions."

"It is a terrific blend of science and art that brings smiles to those who work with it because it is both fun and ultimately rewarding in providing new solutions."

Lance Saunders, Sr. Vice President
Director of Strategic Planning
Leo Burnett, Canada

"Real Time Strategy takes you and your team into the essence of your business and leads to a shared number of valuable guiding principles required by the actual situation your business is in...if you are willing enough to face reality."

"At first, you may think you are not any longer the strategist and that you are running the risk to lose your organization's alignment. The implementation of your shared Strategic Guiding Principles in the field will show you the contrary."

Dino Poggio, Managing Director
KI Group SpA, Italy

"The way it gives you a clear understanding of the company's opportunities is brilliant. You get a common understanding – a visual reference that can't be misunderstood. We have already begun to apply it – and with great success."

Klaus Fog, CEO & Founder
SIGMA a/s, Copenhagen, Denmark

"LEGO SERIOUS PLAY has changed the way we worked."

Jean-Louis Cheyrou, Managing Director
Tetra Pak, France

"It's fast, it's fun, it's effective."

Cliff Dennett, Head of Strategic Alignment
Orange, London, UK

"It shakes things up a little, but in the end you're more in control."

Martin Stirm, Managing Director
Alcatel/EDD, Germany

"The SERIOUS PLAY process is immensely empowering. We are much better connected now."

Ole Dalsgaard, Sales Director, Public Division
SAS Institute, Denmark

"Why is the LEGO Group developing SERIOUS PLAY?"
"Because children should be our role models; their creativity, curiosity, and joy in learning are too often missing in our adulthood. By using LEGO bricks as a universal language and an invitation to the child in every one of us, LEGO SERIOUS PLAY bring back the power of play to adults."

Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, President and CEO
The LEGO Company, Denmark

Testimonials Collected from Recent Media (English)

"The LEGO is a platform between people. Two minds have to meet and find a common understanding about what they are doing, and what they are trying to create. In normal circumstances a conflict of approach might lead to argument or shouting. This changes the way they interact."

"The training becomes a real-time process. We have integrated their model in an active part of departmental meetings. It is an excellent way of improving corporate communications, which will then lead, we hope, to an improved bottom line."

"The difficulty with big ideas is taking them beyond the board, to the rest of the company. It's so vital to help everyone realize how we want to change, and why."

Dr. Jan Binau
Varta Batteries, Denmark

[Return to Menu](#)

Executive Discovery LLC Client List

A sample of company's that have utilized LEGO SERIOUS PLAY:

<u>Black Point Inn</u> Maine, USA	<u>Comparex</u> Germany
<u>Daimler-Chrysler – South Africa</u> South Africa	<u>Dean College</u> Massachusetts, USA
<u>EMC Corporation</u> Massachusetts, USA	<u>EKA Chemicals</u> Sweden
<u>Eskom</u> South Africa	<u>Firmenich</u> Geneva, Switzerland
<u>F. Hoffmann-La Roche</u> Pharma Research. Switzerland	<u>LEGO Company</u> Billund, Denmark
<u>Mass Bay Community College</u> Massachusetts, USA	<u>McKesson</u> Georgia, USA
<u>Nokia</u> Espoo, Finland	<u>Orange SA</u> London, United Kingdom
<u>Overstock.com</u> Utah, USA	<u>Prudential Financial</u> New Jersey, USA
<u>Sanlam Group</u> Bellville, South Africa	<u>Sasol</u> South Africa and Mozambique
<u>SAS Institute A/S</u> Copenhagen, Denmark	<u>Schlumberger Information</u> Texas, USA
<u>Standard Bank of South Africa</u> Republic of South Africa	<u>Stonehill College</u> Massachusetts, USA
<u>SOS Children's Villages</u>	<u>Taco Bell</u> New England Franchise - USA
<u>Tupperware EAM</u> Nyon, Switzerland	<u>Varta Battery</u> Stenlose, Denmark
<u>Wheaton College</u> Massachusetts, USA	

Lego | It's serious play

The value of play as an adult learning tool seems to be one of the themes of this section, and for those of you who thought that you had left fun behind with your childhood, let me introduce you to **Lego Serious Play**.

An innovative company needs innovative strategies – and when the Dubai Islamic Bank wanted to come up with a completely new approach, they turned to a radical training method created by Lego, the makers of those brilliant building blocks you probably played with as a child. “We needed to come up with a new approach – we needed to get the key people in our organisation to share the same values,” explained Ahmed Ali Sarkal, Vice President, Human Resources Development. “Using Lego Serious Play, we came up with 5 core values for the bank in only two days. We explored all the issues very thoroughly, and were able to come up a future road map for the organisation.”

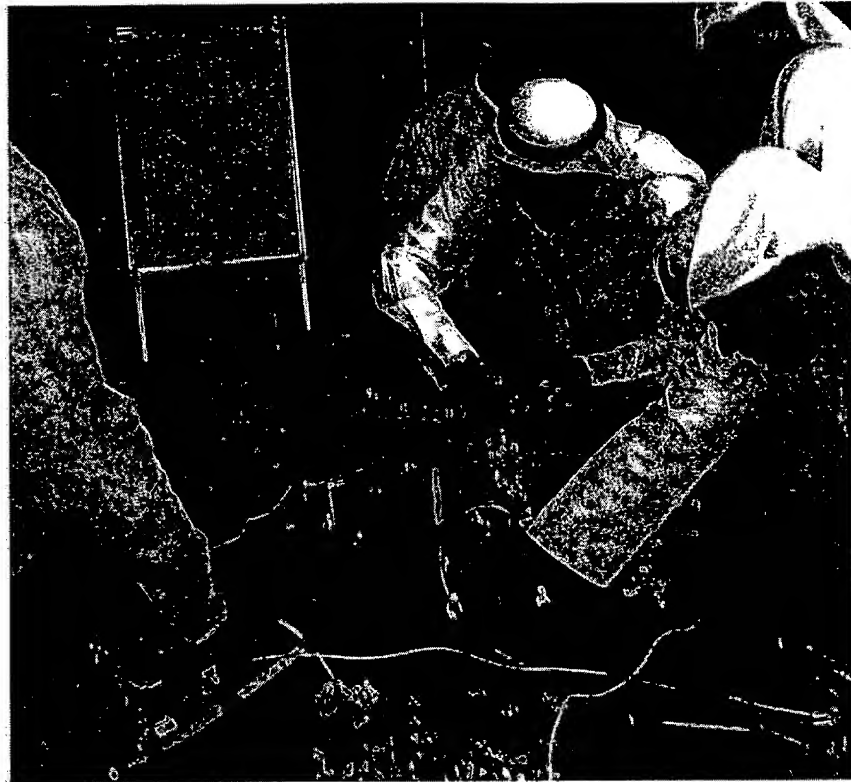
It is clear from their choice of Lego Serious Play that Dubai Islamic Bank is an open-minded organisation, and this is clearly an ideal state from which to benefit from the activities. “We didn’t have a clue what to expect. We followed the trainers... but all the ideas came from us, they were not imposed,” added Ali Sarkal. The participants built a huge Lego model, which they subsequently used in a presentation at a senior management workshop, enabling them to demonstrate the origins of key bank concepts such as “Sales with Pride”, “Practice Islamic Values”, “Lead with Vision” and “Team up to Win”.

“Everyone loved it – our reactions can be seen in the informal photographs which were taken throughout the sessions,” said Ali Sarkal. “It took us back to our childhood.” The uninhibited enthusiasm is perhaps all the more surprising when one learns that the group of 14 employees who took part were drawn from all levels of the organisation, and included women.

Lego Serious Play is an innovative, experiential process designed to enhance business performance. Based on research that shows that this kind of hands-on, minds-on learning produces a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the world and its possibilities, Lego Serious Play is an efficient, practical and effective process that works for everyone within an organisation. Participants come away with skills to communicate more effectively, to engage their imaginations more readily, and to approach their work with increased confidence, commitment and insight.

Safely away from the office and the predictable demands of paperwork strategies, employees experience the liberation of playing with Lego bricks; building landscape models, keeping their hands busy while “building” the thoughts that are usually locked in the brain.

Lego Serious Play allows participants to explore the relationships and connections between people and their worlds, to try out various scenarios in safety, to explore ideas without real-world boundaries, to gain real



“Lego Serious Play also offers new teams a rapid route to effective social bonding, and improved team performance.”

insight into personal, interpersonal and organisational dynamics, and to benefit from the social bonding of working together with others in the group.

It can be used for a wide variety of organisational applications. Members of a new project team can rapidly bond to achieve a shared view of the challenges and opportunities of a project, with a real understanding of the business context, and an ability to identify critical actions. Lego Serious Play also offers new teams a rapid route to effective social bonding, and improved team performance.

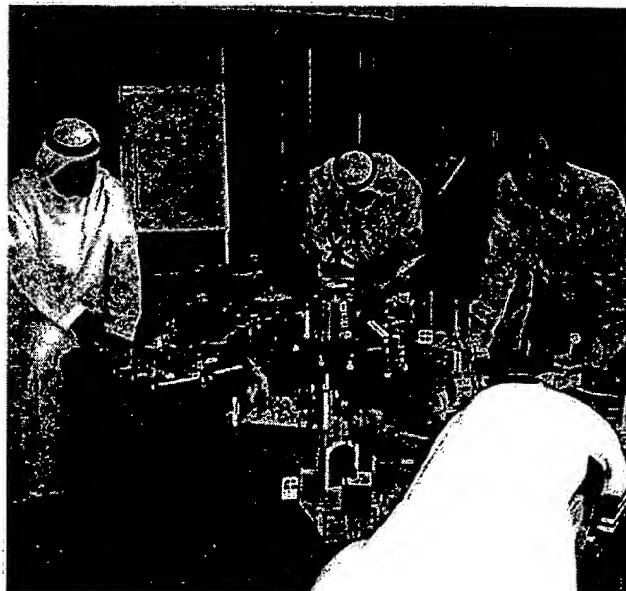
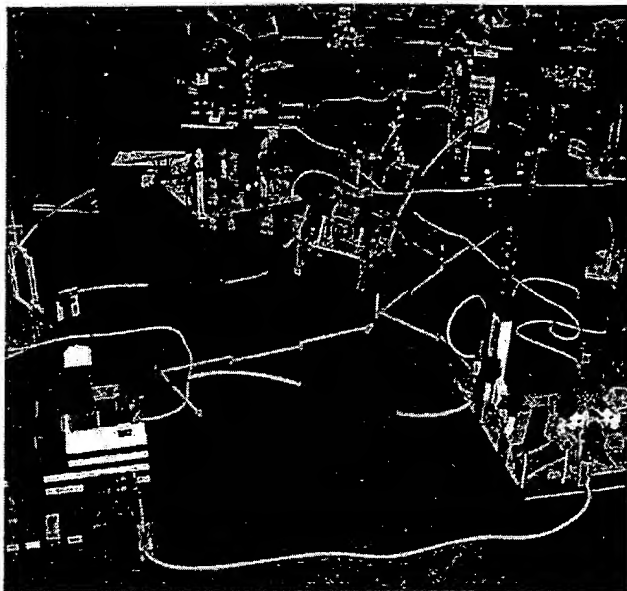
Strategic planning has come to be seen as the route to effective business performance in today's rapidly changing landscape, and Lego Serious Play's Real Time Strategy programme has been designed to address this. Participants can expect to achieve full insight into the shared identity of the enterprise through a comprehensive analysis of the business landscape, and the nature of the relationships. Ultimately, the programme offers a pathway to effective decision-making.

Product development and branding strategy are additional areas which Lego Serious Play's programmes are designed to address.

Lego supports the Serious Play's Real Time Strategy programme with an impressive body of research about the nature of play as a central learning activity for the workplace. And if anyone is still in doubt about this, have a look at their summary below:

Why does work need play?

- Play helps release thoughts that are locked in the head and the heart.
- You see things differently. Ideas come to life with more concrete detail than ideas expressed through just talking.
- Discussion during play happens on a more level playing field.
- The group at play thrives only when everybody participates, so frustrations are reduced, team coherence and direction is more solid.
- Play lets you experiment, explore and take risks with ideas without fearing consequences that might happen in “real life.”



- You generate a wider and more imaginative range of possibilities during play than you would during a traditional business meeting.
- People at play are more present, more engaged, more passionate and better performers.

Why does play work?

- Play is special: if it's routine it's not play.
- Play is voluntary: it can't be coerced or mandated.
- Play is imaginative: you can suspend the rules of the real world.

- Play isn't explicitly productive: direct consequences don't matter.
- Play is unlimited and delimited: play exists for its own sake and is different from work.
- Play happens at an agreed upon location: but it can be anywhere.
- Play has its own rules: it is not constrained by the rules of work.
- Playing is instinctive for all animals and is often better than doing the thing itself. If it were better for lion cubs to learn to hunt by killing from the start, they would not spend as many months "playing" kill with each other.

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An article about Dubai Islamic Bank's strategies for culture change can be found in the Features section of this magazine.

Learning | Anyone for a game of business?

For those of you who prefer board games - an original way to help your managers become financial wizards...

Ask people what they enjoyed about their childhoods, and they will probably tell you that they enjoyed playing games. Play is fun, but, for children, play is a serious activity – through which they learn, and learn faster than at any other point in their lives. Michael Gebel, founder of Business Tools for Innovation Management Consulting GmbH (BTI) loves playing games, and when he became involved in training, he realised that play also provided an enjoyable route to adult learning.

"I'd worked as a business consultant before founding BTI in 1977," he explained. "And I realised how hard it is for people to go back into a learning situation, once they are working full-time, especially when they need to learn about organisational changes. So, I thought about games; games are fun; games are good."

As a result Gebel developed a number of business simulation board games, all of

which allow participants to learn how to run a business; through play, and through group learning, participants share the experience of understanding the daily activities of a company, and learn how these activities impact upon the bottom line; learn what the customer gains; learn how to add value, where to make cuts – and how to understand the consequences of all these actions.

"Around 50,000 people have played these games," added Gebel. "Some 150 business schools are already working with them, and they are also used in schools to help pupils learn the basics of how a business works."

The BTI Business Simulation Board Games are now available in the region (UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia) through exclusive agents biz-ability. Six of the biz-ability consultants will add their local expertise, including both English and Arabic, to the delivery of the games and are accredited to deliver to BTI's

international standards.

The most effective method for running the games is over one day (for standard games) which imposes less time-pressure on participants; participant-related additional messages and action plans can be integrated into the session. The optimum number of delegates per session is between 20-30, which not only ensures a balanced learning:cost ratio, but also enables delegates to achieve learning outcomes normally achieved through two days of Finance for non-Financial Managers training.

A wide range of BTI games are currently available, or under development. biz-ability are happy to discuss specific requirements with clients, and can arrange for games to be tailor-made by BTI ■

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